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SOME RITES OF PASSAGE AMONG THE TAWSUG OF THE PHILIPPINES

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INTRODUCTION

The Tawsug belong to the general group known as the "Moros" in the Philippines. This name derives from the Spanish, inasmuch as the Moros (or Moors) they knew in Spain were Mohammedans.

It is a dramatic historical fact that the Spaniards, having devoted several centuries to the process, had succeeded in expelling the "Moros" from Spain; then, sailing around the world, they again met "Moros" in the Philippines, and set to fighting them all over again. As one result, apropos of any anthropological study of the Moros, we should note that the Spanish literature is largely useless; the Spaniards were engaged in fighting the Moros, not in studying their culture. Exceptions are few but notable.

The name "Tawsug" seems to be derived from "law" (person or people) and "sug" (current). They inhabit the Sulu Archipelago, which word seems to be derived from a cognate "sulug," in Magindanao and Binisaya, also meaning currents. The riptides, whirl-pools and swift currents playing about many of the Islands seem to have inspired the name. The Spanish "Joló" (the current name of the capital of the Archipelago) is a poor foreign representative of the word "Sulu."

The Sulu Archipelago forms a line of island stepping-stones between Borneo and Mindanao. Its inhabitants are local Malaysians, Mohammedanized since the fourteenth century A.D.,¹ mixed with Samal Moros, who may have been Mohammedan upon their arrival.² Because of their centralized position with reference to trade routes, the sea-faring nature of many of their activities,

¹ Cole, F. *The Peoples of Malaysia*, New York, 1945, p. 195.

² Saleeby, N., "Studies in Moro History, Law and Religion," *Ethnological Survey Publications*, Vol. 4, pt. 2, Manila, 1905, p. 52; and "The History of the Sulu," *Bureau of Science, Division of Ethnology Publications*, Vol. 4, pt. 2, Manila, 1908, pp. 153, 125.

the successive influences of the Empires of Majahapit and Malacca, of Brunei and of the Chinese traders, their culture is more complicated and less representative of the original culture of the southern Philippines than are those of many isolated Mindanao groups. However, a deep basic similarity often appears. In this brief paper, little space will be available for comparative material, but a number of broad statements of congruence will be made; we hope to document these statements in a future publication.

A favorite activity of the Tawsug—piracy—plus the influence of Mohammedanism, encouraged the warlike ideal in their culture, and a feeling of superiority over Christian and pagan. As a matter of fact, this type of ingroup feeling is experienced, more or less, by all the Philippine Moros.

The Sultanate of Sulu endured for 425 years; indeed there is still a Sultan in the capital city, Joló, although he is shorn of most of his powers. The Sultanate waged very successful war with the Spaniards, until the introduction of steam boats, in the middle of the nineteenth century. Its power began to wane at that time.

Three rites of passage of the Tawsug will be briefly described: (1) *Pag-gunting*, or the cutting of the hair; (2) Circumcision; (3) Marriage. There will not be space for a discussion of Death and Burial.

1. PAG-GUNTING

There is no particular ceremony associated with the giving of a name to the new-born child. This is in general true of the whole southern Philippines.

The ceremony which acknowledges an infant as a bona fide male member of the group, the *Pag-gunting*, occurs a variable length of time after birth, but usually about two years, by which time the child has become a walking and talking personality. The ceremony, a simple one, involves two important factors in Tawsug religion: the concept of the soul, and the expression of adherence to Mohammedanism by means of the rite of the Maulud.

The ceremony takes place in the father's house. In the center of the room a sort of pillar of woven coconut fronds and other leaves is erected. In other parts of the area, mention has been

made of pots of rice in the center, instead of the herbal decoration.³ As many Imams⁴ as possible are invited, and (as is common in Tawsug rites) passages from the Qoran are chanted, in this case throughout the night.

After breakfast in the morning, the infant is suspended in a *patadjion*,⁵ through the other end of which a wooden staff has been thrust. Holding this staff, the Imams turn the child around and around, in the meantime chanting prayers. The prayers completed, the motion of the infant is stopped, and one Imam holds the child while another pours perfume on its hair, and then cuts off a lock of the hair from the vertex of the head.

This lock of hair is put into a small coconut, which has been emptied of its water. This coconut is suspended, in an open-work hemp "basket," from a nearby tree.

The two good accounts we have of this ceremony elsewhere⁶ differ in details, but not in essentials. In one case, at least, the ceremony has been affected by Christianity; indeed, some of the Moros of Siasi refer to the *Pag-gunting* as "baptism."

The interesting indication of a basic similarity with the customs of the Mindanao groups is the fact that the heads of Tawsug children are kept shaved, for several (five or six) years thereafter, only a forelock of hair being retained. I was informed by numerous Subanun informants that the *gimud*, or "soul," resides in this forelock, until the child grows up; the *gimud* may then shift its locus at will, even taking up residence in the clothing.

The pattern of depositing things separated from the body (the placenta and umbilical cord, hair, finger-nail parings, etc.) in some sort of receptacle and hanging these on trees is widespread throughout the southern Philippines.

There is an unresolved relationship here to the widespread belief (also among the Moros) that the (or the main) soul enters the body through the bregmatic fontanelle, and leaves it at death

³ Orosa, A., *The Sulu Archipelago and Its People*, Yonkers, 1923, p. 82.

⁴ The word *Imam* has quite a different connotation in the Near East and here. The Tawsug Imam is a religious functionary. The word *Pandita* is also employed.

⁵ A *patadjion* is essentially a largish tube of cloth, used variously as an essential article of clothing by the Tawsug (and other Moros).

⁶ Orosa, p. 82; Cavalleria, P., "Letter to Father Francisco Sanchez," in Blair, E. H., and Robinson, S.A., *The Philippine Islands*, Vol. 43, 1903-09, pp. 255-267, especially p. 257.

through the same area. The problem is being attacked by a colleague.

We do not have time here to discuss the plurality of souls as a widespread belief of Southeast Asia. We must, however, mention the fact that the *Pag-gunting*, and other ceremonies, are usually associated with the Maulud, which is the celebration of the birth of Mohammed.

The third month of the Mohammedan year is a month of feasts, and the twelfth day of the month is traditionally thought to be the birthday of Mohammed, as well as the day of his death. Although this feast is not one of the two great feasts assigned by traditional law, it gradually became obligatory in Indonesia and the Philippines, and even overshadows the great feast of the tenth day of the twelfth month. However, in practice the Maulud (from the Arabic Maulid), is celebrated on various occasions, very often in combination with other feasts. Indeed, my first informant discussed the Maulud as a ceremony next after the *Pag-gunting*, and offered for the prosperity of the household.

Typically the Maulud consists of chanting of verses dealing with the life and activities of Mohammed, a prayer, and a feast. The chanting of sections of the Qoran usually takes place among the Tawsug, and this is a characteristic part of all their ceremonies.

2. CIRCUMCISION

This ceremony, called *Mag-Islam*, is a true rite of passage, in an even more definitive sense than was the *Pag-gunting*.

It is performed on a pre-pubertal boy, approximately twelve years old. The timing is at the decision of the father. An Imam, several male volunteers, and a number of female chanters are employed. The ceremony is usually held of a morning, either before or after a feast.

The boy squats on a mat, and two young men hold a white cloth (*coco crudo*) over his head and wave it up and down during the ceremony.

The Imam causes the foreskin to protrude through a split in a small piece of bamboo, and secures this position by slipping on a small rattan ring. He shears off the protruding part of the foreskin with a steel knife. As he does so, he utters the word "*Bismallah*" ("In the name of God"). After the operation the

Imam applies powdered *dapaw niug*⁷ to the wound, and binds it with a white cloth. There are prayers before and after the operation, the one subsequent to the circumcision being repeated after the Imam by the subject.

At the end of the operation, the singing ceases. The abscised foreskin is placed in a half of a coconut shell, and buried at the base of the house approach. Unless this were done, the boy could anticipate trouble in getting married well, later on. After two days, the boy immerses himself in the sea, and takes off the white cloth. If not well healed by that time, he goes bathing every day, and applies fresh *dapaw niug*, until he is healed. Then the boy is *Islam*.

Of much less importance is *Mag-Sunat*, or the quasi-circumcision of girls. This ceremony is performed by a midwife. There is no feast, no singing associated with it. Only women are allowed to witness it. The midwife takes a steel knife and rubs it over the anterior portion of the labia majora (the exact area is an interpretation of the writer). Evidently there is no clitoridectomy or anything similar. However, several informants insist that this ceremony makes a girl a real Mohammedan. Had we the time, we should like to descant on the differences in Mohammedan belief and practice between the Near East and the Sulu Archipelago.

The distribution pattern of circumcision (of various forms, including medial subincision) seems to rule out the possibility of the practice being simply a result of Mohammedan influence. The Tagalogs, some present-day Bisayans, ancient Bisayans, Manobos and others practice or practiced circumcision, under circumstances which preclude their having borrowed the custom in the very recent past from Mohammedanism. It is remarkable that all use steel knives, which seems to argue for a relatively recent introduction of the custom. And yet, on the Peninsula⁸ a bamboo knife is used. This indicates a greater antiquity for the custom than the steel knife. In any case, we agree with Heine-Geldern⁹ that the practice is "*vorislamisch*." Above all, we should

⁷ *Dapaw niug* is the burlap-like material found at the base of the coconut frond. Powdered, it is widely esteemed as being medicinal for wounds.

⁸ Skeat, W. *Malay Magic*, London, 1900, p. 360.

⁹ Heine-Geldern, R., "Sudostasien," In: G. Buschan, *Illustrierte Völkerkunde*, Vol. 2, pp. 689-968, Stuttgart, 1923, especially p. 855.

note that the ceremony is far from being a formal puberty rite, something which never was developed in the Philippines.

As regards its religious implications for the Mohammedans, we may mention that circumcision was never explicitly enjoined by the Qoran, but that it is de facto observed by all Mohammedans as a semi-religious ceremony, accompanied by great festivities. The operation can be performed by anyone. As noted, it is performed among the Tawsug by the Imams, another example of the way in which the Imams have become a "clergy" in our area, as opposed to the strict spirit of Mohammedanism, which definitely allows of no cleric group.

The quasi-circumcision of the females has no parallels in the southern Philippines, and is obviously an imitation of male circumcision. For us, it is another evidence of the fact that females in our general area are much more the equals of males than they would be, for example, in the Near East.

3. MARRIAGE

As is usual in non-industrialized areas, marriages occur when the groom and bride are young. Without a statistical study (which would be rendered difficult by the fact that people here are not accurate about their ages), we should hazard the opinion that the groom is about seventeen or eighteen, and the bride fifteen to seventeen, at the time of marriage.

Negotiations are initiated by the father of the groom. He has become friendly with the father of the prospective bride, if not already so. There are no restrictions about the selection of the bride, as there would be in societies employing the unilateral principle, but class considerations have to be observed.

One of the most characteristic Philippine patterns is the employment of a go-between. The party the father of the groom organizes to visit the father of the bride includes an *ohan*, go-between, who does the real talking, with an *ohan* supplied by the girl's father. The two fathers are now allowed to enter into this discussion. Also characteristically Philippine is the oratorical nature of the joust between the two *ohans*. A great deal of time and oratory are devoted to the adjustment of the bride-gift. For the upper class, this may amount to P1,000 to P10,000 (the peso is theoretically worth half a dollar); for the middle classes, from

P500 to P800; the lower middle, P200 to P300; and the lower class P70 to P150. The dowry may be partly in money, but is generally in kind.

It will be noted that we employ the term "bride-gift" and not "bride-price." This is precisely because the implications of *bride-price* do not obtain here, if they are valid anywhere.¹⁰ In general, the bride-gift is considered a compensation for the loss of the female to her family, and a recompense to her family (especially her mother) for the expenditure of time, energy and material things in the rearing of the girl. In our area, as elsewhere, a return gift from the family of the bride is expected, an expectation which strengthens our attitude on this point.

After having become *tunang* (engaged; much like our word: sweethearts), the female is secluded in a special room built for her, and the groom cannot see the bride, or converse with her. On the other hand, the groom is expected to supply rice, fish, betel nuts and cigarettes for the bride's father.

A second delegation, including the *ohan* of course, approaches the father of the bride, after about three months of engagement, and sets the date for the marriage.

The expected preparations take place. Clothes for the groom and bride are prepared, decorations for the house, and comestibles. For the immediate occasion, the groom's face is powdered; typically, the bride's face is heavily creamed and eyebrows are painted.

A procession for the groom includes two men who chair the groom (when he does not ride a horse), two men who fan him, an umbrella-bearer for the groom, and one each for the two fanners, a singer for the verses from the *Qoran*, musicians, bearers of the bride-gift, and relatives.

In the house of the father of the bride, a special mat has been prepared for the groom and his immediate entourage. They squat on this, until the singer finishes her chanting. Then the groom is allowed to enter the special room in which the bride awaits him. She is squatting with her back to the door. The groom lifts up the bride and turns her around three times until she is facing him. A struggle on her part is expected at this point.

¹⁰ Murdock, G. *Social Structure*, New York, 1949, p. 21.

Then the real act of *mag-batal*, becoming married, occurs. The groom passes his hand over the forehead of the bride, or at least places his forefinger on her forehead. One informant (from Siasi) told me that the groom takes the rib of a coconut frondlet, which has been dipped in soot, places it on the glabellar region of the bride, and flips it upward. Subsequently, the Imam prays for the marriage, that it may be blessed. Holding one end of a small white cloth, and giving the other end to the groom, he asks: "Do you, N., take N. as your wife?" The groom utters the word "Bismallah," and releases his end of the cloth.

The bride and groom are then escorted out into the open, where all can see them. A big feast is spread, music and dancing occur.

For three days the bride and groom must stay in the house of the father of the bride, and the marriage is not yet consummated. After the three-day period, the couple proceed to the house of the father of the groom, dismiss their immediate entourage (giving them gifts) and the marriage is consummated.

We should like to select two points for special comment. The first: the use of the coconut frondlet midrib and the soot. Only one informant gave us this detail. But in the literature there are numerous references to the fact that the Moro groom places his hand or his forefinger on the forehead of the bride.¹¹ The coconut frondlet and soot is probably an aberrant pattern on the Island of Siasi and further research is being carried out on this point. At any rate, what we have described is contrary to the almost universal custom of the southern Philippines, according to which the eating of rice by the bride and groom together is considered the essence of the marriage rite.

I doubt that sitting on the same mat may be equated with eating out of the same dish as "the cardinal symbolic act of the rite" of marriage, as Kroeber¹² seems to formulate the either-or statement for the Philippines in general.

¹¹ Orosa, 85; also Montero y Vidal, *Historia de la Pirateria malayo-mahometana en Mindanao, Jolo y Borneo*, 2 Vols., Madrid, 1888, see Vol. 1, p. 89; Livingston, C. E., *Notes on the Sulu of Jolo* in Beyer, H. O. and Holleman, F. D., *Beyer-Holleman Series on Philippine Customary Law*, Manila, 1931 (typewritten; available in Congressional Library), Vol. V, Series H, No. 1, 1915, p. 17; and also, Stephenson, H. B., *Notes on the People of Tawi-Tawi* in Beyer-Holleman Series, p. 41.

¹² Kroeber, A., *Peoples of the Philippines*, Second and revised edition, *Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist.*, Handbook Series, No. 8, New York, 1928, p. 153.

Secondly: the differences between a Tawsug marriage and the precepts of Mohammedan law should be noted. The Mohammedan concept of the marriage contract, according to the Shafi'ite law books, is that it is an agreement between a man and a woman, in which the woman is represented by a *wali*. The primary subject of the contract is sexual intercourse, and all its sequelae. In return, the man supplies the bride-gift, and undertakes to furnish his wife with food, raiment and lodging (should he marry other women, he will not spend more time with them than with his first wife, without her consent). There must be two witnesses. Proper *walis* are male relatives of the bride in ascending or descending line, or collateral male relatives if these are unavailable. If appropriate male relatives are unavailable a *qadhi* (civil judge) may be substituted.

In any case, marriage is considered a purely civil affair by Mohammedanism. It is characteristic of the assumption of a clerical status by the Imams (and panditas) of the Sulu Archipelago, that they officiate at marriages much as do ministers of Christian Churches.

TREATMENT OF DISEASE IN THE NEW GUINEA HIGHLANDS

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INTRODUCTION

Sickness and death are the lot of every man, but even the simplest primitive will not submit to these powerful foes without a courageous struggle. The present article is a sketch of the medical knowledge and practice of a New Guinea society in the so-called Middle Wahgi area of the Western Highlands District. The first contact with these tribes was made twenty-five years ago. The entire Middle Wahgi, however, was considered "uncontrolled" or "restricted" until the end of 1947, and it was only in the last decade that missions and a government post were established there.

Ignorance regarding some of the most elementary medical and physiological facts is indeed great among these mountain dwellers. Nevertheless, in their repeated attempts to ward off disease and death, these Stone Age people have learnt during the course of centuries not a few effective means of coping with disease. Without correctly grasping the nature of disease, they have discovered and applied a *materia medica* which, although very limited in scope, is often basically the same as our own; without realizing that there exists an intimate connection between the human mind and bodily health, they have constantly applied psychological media to restore their fading physical strength; without appreciating the basis for the effectiveness of such practices as massaging, blood-letting, applying hot and cold compresses, administering cathartics and emetics, and rigid dieting, the New Guineans have nevertheless made good use of these and other means in their struggle with the forces of disease and death. These forces, as generally conceived by the people, are spiritual in nature; the means applied, therefore, are likewise generally conceived as spiritual. Although the anthropologist may for practical reasons of description distinguish between medicine and religion, such a clear distinction is not present in the native mind: in fact, to the highlander, medicine and religion are for the most part one.

The description that now follows is not intended to be an exhaustive inventory of native medicines and medical practices, but rather a series of illustrations of what we have just outlined.

The illustrations are based on personal observations and interviews over a period of almost four years (1952-1956) while the author was doing anthropological and linguistic field work in the New Guinea Highlands.¹

I. THERAPY AND THE SUPERNATURAL

The Magico-Religious Character of Illness. To a very large extent the medical practices of the highlanders are a form of ritual. Ritual, however, makes little sense unless one fully grasps the religious beliefs underlying the ritual. We would, of course, go too far afield were we to attempt to describe the religion of the people in detail. We shall, therefore, limit our description to the salient features of those religious beliefs which seem more closely related to health and disease. For a fuller description the reader is referred to a previous article entitled "Worship of the Dead in the Middle Wahgi (New Guinea)."²

Essentially, the Middle Wahgi religion consists in worshiping deceased patrilineal relatives. These relatives live ordinary, human lives in the other world. Their happiness does not depend on their own behavior during life on earth, but rather on the attention they receive from the living. The "home of the dead," *kipku*,³ is believed to be the ancestral burial place itself.

The souls in the other world are beings with super-human powers, and therefore are greatly feared by the living. The dead, more than anyone else, including nature-spirits, are responsible for the good and bad fortune of the living—whether it be a question of a successful delivery, victory in a tribal war, fertility of pigs and gardens, or, above all, the health of family and clan. Old age seems to be the only natural cause of death.

We might best exemplify the supernatural character of a serious illness by means of a few personal experiences. A man,

¹ The first two years of field research were financed by the Ford Foundation, for which assistance the author wishes to express his sincere thanks.

² *Anthropos*, Vol. 51, 1956, pp. 81-96.

³ All native terms are spelled phonemically, according to the orthography proposed in Louis J. Luzbetak, *Middle Wahgi Phonology*, Oceania Linguistic Monographs, No. 2, University of Sydney, Australia, 1956. The velar nasal, however, will be represented by means of the diagraph "ng".

whose home was only a stone's throw from my station at Ambang, had severely beaten his wife, using the blunt side of his axe. The following day the man consulted a spirit-medium so as to discover which of his departed relatives was causing his wife's death.

Or again, my gardener had eaten a considerable amount of spoiled lard, rancid from age. The stomach-ache that resulted threw the man into convulsions. He was going to die—however, not from the spoiled fat which he had eaten but because his deceased brother was angry with him. My gardener had of late been too friendly with the clan responsible for his brother's death.

The worried father of one of my schoolboys came to me breathless one day, asking me for some medicine for his son. "Where is the sick boy?" I asked. "He went fishing to the Wahgi River," was the reply. "And that's just the trouble. The river-spirit will certainly make him sick, so I want to have some medicine on hand when he returns." The background of the man's worries is simple: before the arrival of the Europeans, the highlanders living in the Wahgi flats were almost exterminated by what seems to have been malaria, and the river-spirits were blamed for the deaths.

In theory, even minor ailments and injuries may be attributed to supernatural beings. If a dog or pig bites you, or if you accidentally cut yourself while chopping wood, or if you bruise your big toe on a boulder along the way, there is most likely some supernatural cause behind the discomfort and pain you feel: a nature-spirit, sorcery, or more usually a certain deceased relative of yours is angry with you.

The departed have a very sensitive and vengeful disposition, and one cannot be cautious enough. And they are known for their incredible appetite for pork. They are very easily offended, for example, through disregard for ancestral practices, by too close association with a traditional enemy, or by mere forgetfulness. To placate the dead you will most probably have to slaughter a pig: the meat you may eat with your family and friends, but the soul of the pig you must send to the other world.

Supernatural Healers. That magicians and spirit-mediums should fill the role of doctors or professional healers flows quite

logically from the nature of disease as conceived by the highlander.

A sorcerer possesses uncanny power. By his incantations and secret formulæ he can bring sudden death or prolonged illness to his victim; he can send down a bolt of lightning that will strike the person he designates; he can cause a person's limbs to crumble to pieces. There is hardly a thing this "miracle-man" cannot do. How he concocts his "poison" is of course a secret: he may perhaps use a bit of harmless-looking ginger or a small portion of a decaying corpse. A victim of sorcery can generally be cured only through countermagic, the magic therapy of a medicine-man or witchdoctor.

Whenever the dead rather than sorcery are suspected, usually spirit-mediums are consulted rather than witchdoctors, although it is true that even the departed and wicked nature-spirits are sometimes overcome by the witchdoctor's power.

Magico-Religious Diagnosis. There is usually much speculation among friends and relatives as to the "real" cause of any serious illness. They are, however, not at rest until an expert, a witchdoctor or medium, diagnoses the case.

The mediums are individuals who can come in direct contact with the particular deceased person responsible for the sickness. From the departed themselves they learn which of the many possible relatives has brought about the illness and why, and what the demands for recovery happen to be.

There are actually two distinct classes of mediums. There are, first of all, the "summoners of the dead," called *ye kip mok ñim*. The medium comes to the home of the interested group, and as all anxiously await the arrival of the offended ghost, there is suddenly heard a faint whistle or a gentle knock. The ghost is present, and he has a message which only the medium can understand. "I am Uncle Kip. I am terribly put out about my nephew's conduct. Imagine, he has been associating with my murderer's son! As reparation, I demand that you slaughter your biggest pig, the one with the black spot on its forehead. If you do not, my sick nephew will be with me before long in the other world." This, in substance, is a typical message from the dead, a message that is never left unheeded.

There is also another class of mediums: the "smokemen" (*yit*

nom ye), the "piercers" (*kongo bom ye*), and the "belchers" (*kolngan ñim ye*). The peculiar names refer to the particular methods of diagnosis employed by each. These mediums are, as it were, temporarily possessed by the ghost, without, however, losing consciousness or convulsing. To the question "Is my deceased mother responsible for this sickness?" the smokeman, upon taking a puff, will be made by the ghost to take a deep whistling breath if the answer to the question posed is negative, otherwise the ghost will make the medium choke and cough. To the question "Does the angry ghost intend to kill me?" the belcher will be made to yawn to express an affirmative reply and to belch to express a negative answer. In order to answer the question "Should I sacrifice the *black pig*?" the piercer will pierce a sweet-potato or a piece of ginger or will throw a black spear into the ground. If the stick or spear can be withdrawn without any difficulty, the answer is negative.

The witchdoctor's favorite diagnosis is based on the widely distributed "intrusion theory." Much in accord with the practice of many American Indians and Africans, the Middle Wahgi people believe that a foreign body has entered the patient and is now responsible for the sickness. The foreign body is usually a small pebble—the "poison" that has entered the patient either through sorcery or the activity of some supernatural being.

Ritual Medicine and Therapy. The medicine-man's problem, therefore, is to extract the pebble somehow from the patient's body, and he usually follows one of two procedures in doing so.

Very solemnly the witchdoctor puffs his magical cigarette. He moves slowly toward the patient and then rather forcefully blows the smoke on the affected part of the body. Now turning to those present he says: "Look! Does anyone of you see anything in my mouth? Of course not. As you see, I have put nothing whatsoever into it. Now watch me suck out the poison that is making the patient suffer." The witchdoctor presses his open mouth to the patient's body and sucks out the "poison," immediately spitting it out in the form of a pebble. The pebble is then wrapped in a leaf and cast into a nearby stream.

The second method of extracting the "poison" is manual rather than oral. The witchdoctor, with a *maskal*-leaf in his hand, strokes the various parts of the patient's body, where ac-

cording to the sick person's complaints the pain seems to be most acute. After some vain attempts, the medicine-man finally locates the "poison." Lo and behold—there is a pebble or an arrow splinter in the witchdoctor's *maskal*-leaf. The "poison" has been successfully extracted.

The witchdoctor's visit and treatment will cost the family a small pig, a pearl-shell, or, at least a chicken. Similarly, unless the spirit-medium is assured of a pig, no communication with the dead is possible.

Extraction of "poison" and pig-sacrifices as prescribed by custom or by the spirit-medium are the most effective forms of ritual therapy. Once the medium has specified which departed relative is responsible for the illness and which pig is demanded as condition for recovery, there is no hesitation on the part of the family of the sick person. The pig is immediately brought to the burial place and clubbed to death. The soul of the pig makes its way to the "home of the dead." The pork is cooked in earthen-ovens in the cemetery, the head, however, in one place and the rest of the meat in another. As already indicated, the friends and relatives consume the pork, leaving only the pig's skull near the grave of the deceased person supposedly causing the illness.

There are also a number of lesser cures of a magico-religious nature, which, however, seem not to require the assistance of a witchdoctor or medium.

Thus, for example, a high fever (*kenell tonom*) resulting especially from malaria is lowered by taking a thin branch of a *gisall*-tree and rubbing it up and down the patient's body. Or again, the patient goes to a stream, and taking a handful of sand, rubs it on his abdomen while holding a live reed (*gol*). It is very important merely to bend the reed while applying it to the body, for if the reed were to be broken in the process, the fever would not leave the patient. And still another method of lowering fever is to smear the body of the sick person with lard. A portion of the remaining fat is taken to the bush where a colony of insects eventually consumes it. The fever will leave the patient as soon as the insects have completely consumed the lard, and, as we may conjecture, the sickness enters the insects instead.

A few drops of human blood taken from the back of the hand and roasted in a banana leaf, if eaten by a child, will put an end to its stomach-ache (*wamnge mom*).

Examples of magico-religious therapy such as these might be multiplied. It is a known fact that in many cases these procedures produce what seems to be a true cure, not directly, of course, but by means of allaying fears and through suggestion. The basis of not a few of the diseases is definitely mental rather than physiological. I have known medicine-men who have attached themselves to a government sponsored medical post, either as trained medical orderlies or as friends of such, giving much comfort to the local people, who are still somewhat skeptical about the new-fangled remedies introduced by the government and missions. An Australian physician of the Department of Public Health stationed at Minj once told me how surprised he was to learn that one of his trained native orderlies at the Nondugl medical post could "smell" some of the diseases most difficult to diagnose. One of the most skillful Papuan orderlies at Minj was known throughout the Middle Wahgi as a famous medicine-man. Since the highlanders have not yet been sufficiently educated in European ways and since not a few of their ailments are, as we have said, basically psychological, it is not at all surprising if in some cases native "medicine" should be more effective than even the best modern drugs which the government or missions might offer.

Ritual Preventive Medicine. The most potent preventive medicines are the various pig-sacrifices offered to the dead on the occasion of a funeral or memorial ceremony, or as a *Geru*-offering when small, colorful fertility-shields are worn as part of the festive headdress, or especially on the occasion of the Great Festival (*Goll Kerma*) when hundreds and even several thousand pigs might be slaughtered by a single tribe. During the Great Festival certain important fertility rites take place which are unquestionably a form of preventive magic. All these ceremonies and occasions for pig-sacrifices have been fully described in previous articles and therefore need not be repeated here.⁴

The observance of the fire-taboo (*dop mapill*) is likewise a very common and important preventive measure against disease. As prescribed by the spirit-medium, a person may have to restrict the use of fire to one that is carefully kept "clean" from any

⁴Louis J. Luzbetak, "The Socio-Religious Significance of a New Guinea Pig Festival," *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 3, July, 1954, pp. 59-90; No. 4, October, 1954, pp. 102-130. "Worship of the Dead in the Middle Wahgi (New Guinea)," *Anthropos*, Vol. 51, 1956, pp. 89f, 92-95.

danger of sorcery or machinations of vengeful supernatural beings.

Then, of course, there are the many charms that neutralize black magic and frighten away evil spirits and ghosts. The most important of these is the *kupap*, a charm seen everywhere in the Middle Wahgi, especially on bridges and along the trail, as a kind of entrance to a tribal or clan territory. The magical *kupap* is placed also between a murderer's homestead and the site of the murder. Similar charms, often referred to as *bobo*, are placed on the roof of native houses and elsewhere.

II. NATURAL SELF-MEDICATION

Despite the fact that the highlanders attribute supernatural causation to all serious illness and injuries and to most minor pains, they do recognize the natural effectiveness of certain medicines. These medicines somehow help repair the damage done to the body after the sorcerer, evil spirit, or ghost, so to speak, have had their fill. Some natural remedies, although unable actually to *cure* the patient, can nevertheless give him temporary relief. Then, too, there are some minor pains that "come of themselves," for instance, a rash between the legs caused by perspiration, which natural medicaments are actually able to heal.

The New Guinea highlander recognizes curative properties in roots and herbs, in animal secretions, and in certain minerals. Being a child of Nature, however, he employs the remedies at his disposal often without in any way altering the natural state in which they are found. For instance, he applies milk directly from the mother's breast as medicine. The woman simply sits near a fire to warm her breasts and then squirts the milk into the patient's aching eyes or open sores. Pig-bile (*dop ngabe*) seems to cure certain large ulcers, while urine takes care of smaller sores. A diet restricted to *waike*, a native vegetable, puts an end to constipation (*ej nase pam*), while *koldup*, a type of sugar-cane, settles an upset stomach and controls nausea (*mek sim*). A common nettle (*noj*) is used as a kind of cure-all: one must simply spit on the nettle and then rub it on the body. The burning affect is believed to alleviate such disparate pains as the ordinary headache and muscular fatigue, and is applied even in cases of serious pulmonary troubles. Among the interesting emetics is a variety of rhododendron: the smell of this plant causes

one to vomit and thus gives relief from indigestion and over-eating. The smell of the *ollno*-bark is supposed to make a splitting headache less painful and may even cure it. As a remedy against a cold or sore throat the Middle Wahgi people advise eating steaming-hot *aibe*, a common native vegetable.

The people are acquainted also with a number of poultices. Boils and carbuncles are treated with a concoction of native tobacco, chewed-up ginger and ashes. In an attempt to cure yaws (*kej*), the native "pharmacist" chews a leaf of the *kuimar*-tree, spits it into a banana leaf, and then roasts it in an earth-oven with hot stones. The hot concoction is applied as a poultice. A similar salve is prepared from a young leaf of the *talapan*-tree. The sap of an *olka*-tree is obtained by sharpening the two ends of a branch, and while the middle portion of the branch is being burnt over a fire, the sap (*meb*) drips from the sharpened ends into containers. Other saps, too, for example the black sap of the *nob*-bush (used also for tattooing) are applied to sores. *Olmoimu* and *pulopole*-leaves are heated and their juices allowed to flow on open wounds. A tooth-ache (*gup rom*) becomes less painful when *wopmab* (a kind of herb that grows on stony ground) is heated and then placed into the cavity and around the sore tooth.

The highlander makes use also of medicinal powders. The dry leaf of an *armel*-plant (a variety of native banana) is burnt and the ashes spread over the wound. Simple diarrhea (*ej kujip*) is checked by eating what is essentially a kind of medicinal charcoal, a burnt *torall*-banana. This same medicine is used, without success of course, in outbreaks of dysentery. *Kobllan*, a growth found on trees in swampy places, is dried and burned; the ashes are then eaten together with *kupol*-leaves to alleviate laryngeal disorders.

Numerous mechanical devices are likewise employed in treating bodily ailments. Nausea is checked by lying flat on the ground and smelling the earth. A person suffering intensely from a pulmonary disease (*damen pum*, *gile pum*) is given a water treatment: he is placed into a stream lying down on his back so that the cool water can flow over his chest. Massaging is commonly practiced especially against muscular aches and bruises. Violent pressure (manual as well as by means of belts and various bandages) is used to bring about abortion and to alleviate pain in the stomach. Sometimes the abortion is not successful, with the tragic

result that the child is born crippled and disfigured. Vines, strings, and various forms of bandages are tightly fastened around the head to alleviate headaches. Blood-letting is also employed, especially against headaches: a *kulla*-reed is pushed into the nostrils and twisted to make the blood flow. Blood is sucked from any small wound that can be reached with the mouth. Bleeding is checked especially by means of ashes and tight ligatures. Pus is squeezed out with the fingers and scraped away.

As to native surgical operations—I have personally come across only tooth-extractions and the common amputations of finger-joints and earlobes as marks of sympathy for a deceased relative or close friends. Perforations of the wings of the nose and the septum as well as the earlobes, intended for nasal and aural decorative appendages, are extremely common, if not general. Scarification, especially of the chest and back, occurs, but is not so common or drastic as in other parts of the island.

The application of hot and cold compresses is another common mechanical device in treating diseases and injuries. The smooth, cool leaf of a banana-plant folded over a number of times has a soothing affect on sore eyes. A large, hot *olka*-leaf is pressed tightly across the abdomen to check a diarrhetic condition. Mud-packs are used to alleviate stomach-aches. In an attempt to drive out internal parasites, the patient is made to lie on top of a heap of casuarina needles and sweet-potato leaves over a smouldering fire. The heat will "burn" the worms and drive them out with the excreta.

To my knowledge, larger wounds are not sown up but rather clamped together by a natural adhesive, the *alap*-leaf.

A broken limb is immediately tended to. In fact, quick action is deemed imperative for success. The patient is immediately taken to a fire. The broken limb is placed on top of a heap of sweet-potato leaves under which is a smouldering fire. Men, preferably such as have had some experience in this regard, pull on the limb in an attempt to set the broken bone. The limb is then bound tightly in a splint.

III. MEDICAL KNOWLEDGE AND REPRODUCTION

There is considerable ignorance and very much superstition associated with conception, pregnancy, and birth. We wish here

to point out only a few facts which have a more direct bearing on native medical knowledge.

Premarital pregnancy infallibly ends in abortion. The surprising fact is that in spite of socialized promiscuity, premarital pregnancy is rare. There are a number of possible explanations for the rarity of such pregnancies; however, we prefer to have a medical expert investigate the matter more thoroughly than we have been able to do. There are definitely a number of indications that would make one believe that juvenile sterility is perhaps the most important factor involved. From the limited information available, it seems unlikely that any mechanical contraceptives are used. Withdrawal also seems to be out of the question. The *asab* which girls and young wives take as an oral contraceptive seems actually to be magical in nature, and some forms of *asab* may at most produce an abortion rather than prevent conception. The people themselves are skeptical about the effectiveness of *asab*. In studying the question of the infrequency of premarital pregnancies one should also consider the possibility that frequent and medically unsound abortions may bring on temporary and even permanent sterility. According to native theory, to become pregnant one must have had intercourse very frequently. A single coitus, they claim, would never suffice to make a woman pregnant: in fact, the very thought is ridiculous. An unmarried girl, Kop'nab by name, attending my school was once scolded mercilessly by her mother before a large group of children for not having avoided pregnancy when she could have easily done so. The gist of the vituperation was the shamefulness of the *frequency* of her sexual relations, not the relations themselves. Pregnancy is avoided not only before marriage but also during the first four years after marriage and for a few years after a child is born. Parents who disregard this socially approved norm are ridiculed for having marital relations "too often."

The important economic role played by the women in the Middle Wahgi way of life leaves them, so to speak, relatively little time to be mothers. Even during pregnancy, expectant mothers do heavy work and carry large loads of sweet-potatoes for miles up and down steep and slippery mountain trails. To get the extra strength they need, they have certain berries on which they can nibble and which are supposed to be "especially good" for mothers-to-be.

In theory, twins, especially boys, are desirable. Twins that survive beyond infancy, however, are rare. The ability to bear twins is considered hereditary. Among the Waka of the Nondugl area, and perhaps elsewhere in the Middle Wahgi, a mother wishing to have twins eats "twin" garuka-nuts or bananas, that is, two fruits that are partly fused. To break such nuts or bananas apart and to eat only one of them would render the mother incapable of bearing twins.

As soon as the birth-pains grow severe, the mother is confined to her house or to a specially built "birth house." Her husband may offer a pig to one or more of the deceased to ensure a successful delivery, and he infallibly does so if the delivery proves to be difficult. The expectant mother is assisted only by two or three women; everyone else must absent himself until after the delivery. It is only when there is danger of the mother dying that the entire family and friends, adults as well as children, are allowed to be present.

The women-attendants have no appreciation for sanitation and they are not over-gentle in their technique. I was called one day to the house of a young expectant mother who was having an extremely difficult delivery. When I arrived, one of the midwives was bent forward with the mother on her back, bouncing her up and down and banging her buttocks against the semi-conscious woman's abdomen. Then the midwife straightened out, while the other women would press the mother's body against the midwife's back in an attempt to force the child out of the womb. Then followed more bouncing and banging. Onlookers howled and wailed. Relatives began to crowd around the mother constantly pressing the top of her head, "the door through which the mother's soul wanted to escape." Others slapped the walls and ceilings of the hut and beat the air with their fists, punching, slapping, right and left, in an attempt to force the mother's soul back into the body. I tried to have the men carry the young mother to the government hospital: I argued and threatened, but in vain. It was only when the mother began to convulse and foam at the mouth, and only after all the advice of the spirit-mediums and witchdoctors had been carried out that they finally brought the mother to hospital, where she died the next day. Such cases are not rare. In 1953 Dr. Giblin, a devoted govern-

ment physician at Banz, complained to me of a series of similar experiences which he had had: only after all native "medicine" had proved unsuccessful would the people bring the mothers to the doctor, when even the most skilful obstetrician in the most modern hospital would be helpless.

The umbilical cord is severed by one of the attending women. The afterbirth, according to custom, is buried somewhere in the vicinity of the house where the child was born. A little fence is built around the spot and referred to as "the baby's outhouse."

Mothers are counseled to wash their babies frequently and to keep them well-covered with lard or pandanus oil.

IV. INCURABLE DISEASES AND SPIRIT POSSESSIONS

There are a number of diseases which the highlander considers incurable. Even all the pig-sacrifices in the world and the most powerful magic of the witchdoctor are useless. The unfortunate individuals suffering from such a disease are considered totally in the power of wicked spirits. In fact, they may not even be buried with their kin: they were outcasts in life and they must be outcasts in death. Such permanent spirit-possession occurs in all cases of ascites (dropsy of the abdomen) and in the case of a disease described rather confusedly to me by my informants as "a very serious case of yaws resembling leprosy."

The people speak also of a *temporary* spirit-possession—epilepsy. Anyone who touches or is close to an epileptic during a seizure runs the risk of becoming possessed himself. Even if the victim should fall into a fire or river, his companions would not dare rescue him. The epileptic is a marked person until the evil spirit leaves him. Till then no one will associate, speak or eat with the victim. If he joins a soccer game, he is sure of a goal every-time he gets near the ball, for no one will try to interfere with him. Even the spot where the seizure took place is feared. As soon as the "spirit has really left him," the epileptic is once again acceptable to his age-mates, that is, acceptable until he has another attack.

Epilepsy in the Middle Wahgi is not rare, and we might rightly suspect that the relatively large number of cases is due mainly to brain injuries received during childbirth. I was told that wicked spirits choose at least one such victim from each clan.

Epilepsy is believed to be hereditary, and, I was told, sometimes witchdoctors succeed in putting a stop to epileptic attacks by means of their charms and incantations.

There is also no way of freeing one's self of the internal parasites called *kimin* (hookworm?); nor is there anything that can be done for one suffering from palsy (*bolo ñim*); nor can a leper expect ever to be cured; nor is there hope for one suffering from certain serious internal ailments (e.g., *mudmong oulom nom*). The highlander concedes defeat also in regard to some minor ailments, which, however, being of a minor nature, do not bother him much: "The trouble came of itself and it will disappear of itself," e.g., a sweat-rash known as *kusin*.

CONCLUSION

This is the picture of a simple Stone Age people only recently in contact with European medical knowledge and skills. It is the picture of a simple, likable but ignorant people battling with their two most merciless foes, Disease and Death. It was only ten years ago that the White Man came to the Middle Wahgi to settle there. He came as missionary. He came as government official. Both the Missions and the Government have joined the battle against disease and death with their schools and medical posts. Witchcraft and pig-sacrifices must be replaced by hygiene, sanitation, proper infant care, malaria control. Primitive medicines and practices must be replaced with the best the Missions and the Government can afford. The main challenge, however, is to teach the native to help himself: the pressing need is education.

GRASSHOPPERS AS FOOD IN BUHAYA

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Twice a year edible grasshoppers known as *nsenene* appear in Buhaya-Land, which is located in the Bukoba district of Tanganyika. Nobody knows from where they come, but during the month of November, and also during April, the light of the moon may be obscured by the vast swarms flying over the land. In the morning they alight and are easily caught then as the cold, wet grass keeps them on the ground. In addition, fires are lit in the fields, so that the smoke may keep down the fliers.

Okulinga ensenene means that the Bahaya step out of their huts in the early morning to seek *nsenene* in the fields. When they have found them, they cry loudly to announce to the whole village where the *nsenene* have alighted—in the banana groves, in the open fields, on the hills. Young and old, especially women and children, go out to catch them. Only the very old and sick remain in the huts. The grasshoppers may be gathered anywhere they have fallen and it seems that the owners of the banana groves, for instance, cannot expel as trespassers those who come for that purpose. It has happened sometimes that villagers start fighting with strangers coming onto their grounds to fetch *nsenene*, but they have gone beyond their rights in doing so, because for catching grasshoppers all land is seemingly of a communal character.

The *nsenene* are the greatest delicacy of the Bahaya. This type of small green grasshopper does not eat the grass and leaves, a feature which distinguishes it from the big grasshoppers (*enzige*). In some regions these latter too, are used for food, especially among the Islamic people. The *nsenene*, however, are greatly relished among all Bahaya. They are known by many different names. Those called *Kimbisimbisi* (loc. *parvae virides*) are green; the *Katikomire* (loc. *parvae fuscae*) are brown; the *Kisherorondwa* (loc. *fuscae violaceae*) are purple; the kind called *nsenyi* is not eaten, but if one is caught, it is placed near the mouth of a child and then allowed to go free, in order that the child may always have a good appetite, it is said. If a woman

or girl catches the kind known as *mwamamwama* she sings: "I must bring up a child, I must help it, give me something to bring it up." Whereupon her companions give her some of their catch.

The high regard in which these grasshoppers are held is indicated by a popular saying: "You may be left unburied and without mourners for the fetching of *nsenene*." Again, *Kafwe nsenene igwire* is a malediction against the enemy indicating the wish that they may die without having time to fetch *nsenene*.

As the grasshoppers are caught they may be put into special baskets (*muhyi*) or in big or small sacks. At home the women and girls prepare them first by taking off the wings and feet and then by roasting them or by cooking them in salt water. The women are allowed to drink the water in which the *nsenene* have been cooked, but the women and girls are forbidden to eat them, even though there may be a big supply. This is in order to show deference to the masters of the household and it may be mentioned incidentally, that women and girls refrain from eating the meat of goats for the same reason. During the time of a great famine they were dispensed from the prohibition, but later the men asked the prince-chief to again forbid them to do so.

Children give to their father the grasshoppers which are caught in the morning, while those caught in the evening are given to their paternal uncle. It is forbidden for boys to eat *nsenene* before their father has partaken of them. In the afternoon young people catch *nsenene* for themselves. They may fasten one to a blade of grass and play flirting with it. The Bahaya use the *nsenene* as esteemed gifts, from wife to husband, from girl to her betrothed, from woman to lover or to brothers-in-law. The greatest amount is nine times nine *nsenene*—nine being the sacred number. There exists a dance-song which says that the woman sent four times nine *nsenene* to her lover. Any woman or girl who gives a present of *nsenene* to a man should receive from him a gift of a garment or some money. If the wife or children wish to excuse themselves from any fault before the head of the family, they offer him some *nsenene*. The Bahaya offer *nsenene* even to the dead master of the household at the entrance of the hut saying: "Our Lord, see your *nsenene* of this year which I offer you. Let us eat with peace and not fall ill through eating them."

To have a provision of these small edible grasshoppers the women dry them over the kitchen fire. A wife who is alone at home during the season for catching the grasshoppers must keep them for her husband. To prepare them she must fetch three roots (*mulinzi*, *orukire* and *ekitobonumi*) and chew them up together with grass from the hut. This she then spits on the cooked *nsenene*, whereupon she must say: "May my husband not suffer in his head and back." Then she must dry them and keep them in the highest part of the hut. Having done this, she is free to follow her lover without fearing to bring bad luck to her husband. A wife who has given *nsenene* to her lover before having offered it to her husband must pay to him a fine of a goat and beer. A husband would not eat the *nsenene* offered by his unfaithful wife; he gives them to his children and friends, saying that they may eat it, as it is their own. A husband who returns from a trade or work trip often does not eat the *nsenene* stored up by his wife for fear of bad luck. Nevertheless, he may eat those stored by the wife of a neighbor or friend. Ordinarily, however, a husband eats the *nsenene* prepared as a feast by his wife. When the friends of the woman ask her about it and she can say: "Yes, he has eaten my *nsenene*," the other women congratulate her saying: "Be glad, be glad again."

A wife who refused to catch the grasshoppers when they come in November would have a big argument with her husband and it might even end in divorce. Her father must then pay a fine, generally a goat, so that the husband will forgive his daughter. It would be a great insult to say to a woman that she has eaten the *nsenene* caught for her husband. A husband who has falsely accused his wife of having eaten *nsenene* must pay a fine consisting of some money and meat and a goat to her father, asking for forgiveness.

